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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Remarks on the Food of Young Cowbirds.—To the writer the speculation has been interesting as to whether young Cowbirds must make shift to live and grow on diets varying widely according to the foster parents. An effort has been made to collect material bearing on the problem, but with little success. The vicinity of Washington is a poor place for Cowbirds. However 14 stomachs from other localities have been examined. The distribution among foster parents is as follows: *Icterus galbula* 1, *Pooecetes gramineus* 2, *Melospiza melodia* 5, *Vireosylva olivacea* 2, *Vireosylva gilva* 1, *Dendroica aestiva* 2, and *Geothlypis trichas* 1.

On the whole the evidence is very plain that these species give to the young cowbirds the normal diet for their own nestlings. For instance the Vesper Sparrows were the only birds to feed the terrestrial cutworms; but this is a very natural thing for these ground loving birds to do. Only Song Sparrows fed carabid beetles, and weevils, and more than a trace of seeds. This diet agrees with that described for the sparrows by Judd.[1] Moreover three of the Cowbirds fed by Song Sparrows had a bunch of vegetable fibers in their stomachs and were the only nestlings so favored. The Yellowthroat and Song Sparrow were the only ones to feed snails. The diet of the nestlings fed by the Red-eyed Vireo agrees with previous records for this bird in the inclusion of tree-living homoptera. The youngsters foisted upon Yellow Warblers were the only ones treated to moths, an item known to be given to the nestlings of other warblers.

These records show the adaptability of Cowbirds, a characteristic which must receive a severe test in certain cases. For instance the horned larks and various species of blackbirds and sparrows, habitually feed seeds and hard insects to their young. The Rose-breasted Grosbeak uses the "nasty" potato beetle for baby food; and the Cedarbird uses a large proportion of fruit. Perhaps the greatest departure from the average nestling diet among the species parasitized by Cowbirds is in the case of the Turtle Dove. This bird feeds its young entirely on vegetable matter, some of it half-digested, and mixed with a secretion of the crop, being the substance called pigeon's milk. It would be of great interest to know whether cowbirds are ever reared on this pabulum.

Samuels remarks that "This bird although subsisting principally on various seeds and small fruits, destroys great numbers of insects, particularly in the breeding season; in fact its young are fed entirely on insects and their larvæ, and the well known wire-worms."[2] It has justly been observed before that the credit for choice of insects consumed by young Cowbirds belongs strictly to the foster parents. Considering the food of adult Cowbirds alone the balance is in favor of the species. But when we reflect that each Cowbird brought to maturity is the cause of the death of three or four birds which would have been just as beneficial in the nestling stage, and probably more so in later life, the right of the Cowbird to protection can well be questioned.—W. L. McATEE.

Notes on a Broken Leg in the White-rumped Shrike.—My friend, Dr. G. E. French, has called my attention to a peculiarly healed broken leg of a female White-rumped Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*), which he had collected on February 18, 1911, for mounting.

The tibio-tarsus and fibula of the right leg had been broken squarely off about three-eighths of an inch above the distal end, as is shown in figs. I, II and III. The activity of the bird very evidently had prevented a union of the broken ends, which were separated a sixteenth of an inch, but which had finally been bridged together by two very strong bone arches. As healed, the lower end of the tibio-tarsus had a marked lateral bend, but not enough to attract attention before dissection. The muscles of the lower leg were well developed, which would indicate that the shrike had recovered good use of its foot.

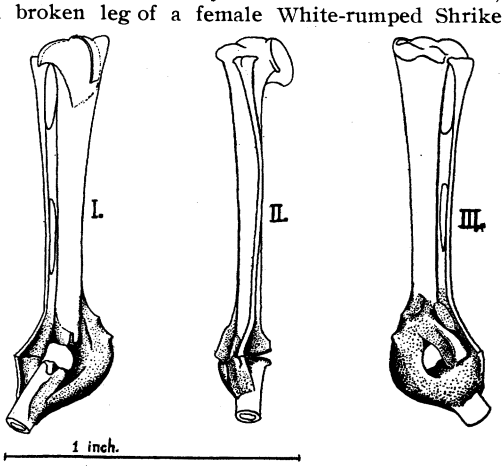

Fig. I is a view of the anterior surface, fig. II a view of the right lateral surface, and fig. III a view of the posterior surface.—CLARENCE HAMILTON KENNEDY.

1 Yearbook, U. S. Dept. Agr. [1900] 1901, pp. 419-422.
2 Samuels, E. A., U. S. Agric. Rep. [1864] 1865, p. 426.

The Catbird in Southern Idaho.—On August 1, 1909, while prowling along a thick fringe of scrub willow, beside a lagoon-like pond on the Boise river bottoms, I started the only catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) I have seen this side of the Rocky Mountains. At the time I did not think the occurrence specially worthy of note, as I was then new to this section; but having explored this same thicket and others of a similar sort and in similar location, many times since, without results, I have concluded the species is rare, in this section at least.—L. E. WYMAN.

A Nesting Incident of the Brewer Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*).—In July, 1909, having occasion to burn a pile of brush in the road near my residence, I removed therefrom a nest of this bird, with three eggs, and fastened the same in a crotch of a small black locust about twenty-five feet distant. The next morning I was surprised to see the mother bird on the nest in its new location, brooding as though nothing had happened, and in due time two young appeared, though the family cat prevented their reaching maturity.—L. E. WYMAN.

The Virginia Rail at Helena, Montana, in Winter.—On February 22, 1911, I secured an adult male Virginia Rail (*Rallus virginianus*) near Helena, Montana. The bird was one of three that were found in a willow swamp where warm springs keep the waters open all winter. The birds were feeding about the edges of these springs. The one shot was in good condition and there is every reason to believe that all of them had remained there throughout the winter. Two other species by no means common in winter in Montana, but seen in the same vicinity at the same time, are the Western Meadowlark and Wilson Snipe.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS.

Occurrence of the Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra minor*) **in Southern Idaho.**—While this bird should be, and probably is, common, or at least not rare, among the conifers of the mountains, it apparently seldom strays into this section of the Boise Valley. Last October I saw a small flock of birds passing overhead and heard the familiar note of the Crossbill. The flock alighted in a Lombardy poplar and a shot brought down a Crossbill and a House Finch. As nearly as I could determine without glasses, the Crossbill was the only bird of its species in the flock, the rest being House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*).—L. E. WYMAN.

The Yellow Rail in Southern California.—A Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), male, no. 2077, coll. of P. I. O., was received from Mr. Evan Davis of Los Angeles. The specimen was collected at Newport Bay, California, on December 12, 1896, by Mr. J. H. Henderson. Are there other records for this vicinity?—PINGREE I. OSBURN.

Some August Notes for Lake Valley.—I spent most of August, 1906, at Lake Valley, which lies at the southern end of Lake Tahoe. This being my first visit at so late a date, a comparison with the Valley's bird life in May and June may be of interest. While advancing summer finds certain birds ascending to still higher altitudes, on the other hand some species, or rather individuals, having reared their young in high altitudes, now descend to lower levels. In May and June at Bijou, such birds as the Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus pinus*), Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Nuttallornis borealis*), Slender-billed Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis aculeata*), Williamson Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) and Clarke Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) are either scarce or wanting; in August, however, I found these not uncommon and collected examples of all of them in the immediate vicinity of Bijou.

Green-tailed Towhees (*Oreospiza chlorura*), while scarce in the breeding season at Bijou, although nesting commonly in certain localities adjacent, were in August one of the most common birds, being found in large numbers along the now dry meadowlands in company with the Sierra Junco (*Junco hyemalis thurberi*).

In general birdlife, being increased by the young of the year, was more abundant than earlier. These conditions did not obtain at the Rowland's Marsh at Al-Tahoe, however, where the defection was very marked. Here we found almost the entire summer congregation absent. Of its usual quota of thousands of Yellow-headed Blackbirds (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) we observed only a single individual, an immature male; Forster Terns (*Sterna forsteri*) were entirely wanting and the very few Black Terns (*Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis*) seen were all young of the year. In our tour of the marsh, however, we secured a new bird for the Lake Valley checklist in the Least Sandpiper (*Pisobia minutilla*). A flock of about twenty passed over our boat and we secured three specimens, all adults. Another species new for the checklist was the Sora Rail (*Porzana carolina*). We first took this bird on the Bijou Meadow on August 12; on August 27, on our trip through the Rowland's Marsh, we noted two more rails of this species. During a stay of a little over a month the writer made a collection of about fifty skins, including a few of the smaller mammals. The two birds already noted, however, were the only ones to be newly recorded for Lake Valley.—MILTON S. RAY.

The Bohemian Waxwing in Placer County, California.—The California Academy of Sciences recently received a female Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrula*) from Dutch Flat, Placer County, California. It was sent by Mr. E. K. Carnes, Superintendent of the State Insectary, who stated that it was shot on February 26, 1911. He writes under date of March 3: "Large numbers of this species of bird have appeared in the apple orchards around the town just named and are feeding on the decaying fruit, which has been left on the ground or is still hanging on the tree."—E. W. GIFFORD.

The Egret in Southern California.—While crossing the salt marsh north of Alamitos Bay, Los Angeles County, California, 9:30 a. m., February 26, 1911, en route to Newport Beach, I saw two Egrets (*Herodias egretta*) standing in a tide pool about seventy-five yards from the Pacific Electric R. R. tracks. The passing of the car did not seem to disturb them. When returning, about 1:30 p. m., I did not see the birds.—C. B. LINTON.

The Troupial in California.—On April 30, 1911, I obtained near Santa Barbara a Troupial (*Icterus icterus*), a most beautiful male. The plumage is absolutely perfect, not a feather being frayed in either wings or tail, and the feet are in perfect condition. To me there seems no possibility that it can be a cage bird. It was in upper Mission Canyon, a very wild locality, in company with a flock of Western Tanagers that were passing through, and seemed very much at his ease. He was in fine condition, and the stomach was crammed with small green canker-worms.—J. H. BOWLES.

Bobolink at Great Altitude.—It may be of interest to note the presence at Leadville, Colorado, at an elevation of 10,150 feet, of two male Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) on the 17th day of July, 1907, a little before nine o'clock in the morning.

They were on a bunch of weeds, less than half a block east of the Public Library, and not more than twenty-five feet from me as I passed on the sidewalk. I might add that they are the only ones I have ever seen in thirty years experience in this county, which includes the principal sources of the Arkansas river.

Perhaps, when the more absorbing duties of early summer were over, they were seeking, like many another, the delightful exhilaration of a mountain trip!—J. CLARENCE HERSEY.

Unusual Nesting Site of the San Nicholas Rock Wren.—While visiting San Nicholas Island, April 14 and 15, 1911, my attention was called to a pair of these wrens (*Salpinctes obsoletus pulverius*) carrying nest material into a crack under the eaves of the store-house where the ranch provisions are kept. Both birds were seen at work at the same time. About 20 men (sheep shearers, et al.) were at work 15 to 30 feet distant, and were constantly passing and entering the store-house. The birds entered the nesting-site while I was standing within five feet of the building.—C. B. LINTON.

Field Notes From the San Joaquin Valley.—Beginning March 5 of this spring (1911) the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California has kept a party in the San Joaquin Valley, central California, for the purpose of investigating the mammal fauna of the region. While the bulk of attention was necessarily devoted to the trapping and study of mammals, some observations were made on the birds of the region traversed. The writer of the present sketch spent about five weeks with the party between March 5 and May 5, and the following scattered information relative to the birds is selected from his note book as being thought worthy of being made accessible to the bird student in general. A few specimens were taken and comments on some of these are also added.

California Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*). Of extraordinary abundance in the vicinity of Raymond, Madera County. I used to be skeptical of the notion that Jays have very much deleterious influence on the small bird life of a locality. But after witnessing a single jay despoil a Brown Towhee's nest and eggs in spite of the spirited defense put up by both owners, and after seeing another jay beating a young sparrow to death, I feel inclined to attribute the relative scarcity of small birds around Raymond to the presence of so many California Jays. The place would appear perfectly suited to a large population of gnatcatchers, bush-tits, towhees, wrens, vireos and warblers, but the expected species were either scarce or wanting. Five jays' nests each with eggs or young were encountered, although I was not hunting for birds' nests. These were in small oaks or ceanothus bushes, four to ten feet above the ground, with no apparent attempt at concealment, beyond that incidental to support and shade.

Western Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum bimaculatus*). A single specimen obtained on an alfalfa patch at Earlimart, Tulare County, April 30.

Western Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus*). Still present at Earlimart, Tulare County, up to May 4. This to my mind constitutes late tarrying of winter visitants, and in no wise indicates a breeding station. The behavior of the birds at no time was such as to lead one to suspect nesting; and a specimen shot on April 30 was just completing a partial prenuptial molt, being in the consequent plumage a duplicate of Alaskan specimens. It would appear quite unsafe to base breeding records of any of these migratory sparrows upon anything short of actual discovery of nests and eggs or small young.

Intermediate Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambeli*). Observed at various points all through April. At Earlimart, Tulare County, several were noted on the 30th. One was shot on May 1, and none were noted thereafter, thus establishing a date of departure for this season and place.

Nuttall Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*). A number of this form were noted in mixed flocks of sparrows in rose thickets along levees five miles northeast of Tracy, San Joaquin County, March 11. Two specimens shot were preserved, and comparison in the Museum shows them to be unquestionably of this race, thus establishing an eastward extension of the known winter range of *Z. l. nuttalli.*

Heermann Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia heermanni*). During the travels of myself and assistants, we kept a constant lookout for song sparrows. The result was that contrary to previous notions large parts of the San Joaquin Valley were found to be absolutely without any representative of the genus. Neither in the vicinity of Tracy, Los Banos, or Raymond could song sparrows be found. A few were noted in the neighborhood of Fresno; and on the Fresno County side of the San Joaquin River near Lane Bridge (ten miles north of the city of Fresno) four specimens were secured. Mr. John G. Tyler, of Fresno, who was with me at this point, helped me to secure these and also contributed a nest with four slightly incubated eggs which he found in the river bottom close to our camp on April 7. Another nest with three fresh eggs was found on the 8th. In each instance the nest was located in low vegetation, against which drift-trash had lodged; in one case the nest was 2½ feet above the ground, in the other four feet.

Song sparrows were found again only at Earlimart, Tulare County, where a male and two females were taken April 30 and May 2. These were the only individuals observed at this place, and were inhabiting a willow-margined reservoir.

The seven song sparrows secured, as just specified, are as uniform as usual, considering the normal range in individual variation; and they are very nearly duplicates of topotypes of *M. m. heermanni* from Fort Tejon, Kern County. The known range of *heermanni*, as lately restricted (see Grinnell, Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool. V, April 1909, p. 266), is thus extended north to include parts of the Tulare basin. *Heermanni* is distinct from *M. m. maillairdi* (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool. VII, February, 1911, p. 197). The differences lie in the much paler "ground color" dorsally of *heermanni*, the narrower black-streaking both above and below and in the slightly smaller bill.

There is still a great stretch of country—between Fresno and Modesto—from which we have no Melospizine returns. There may be an actual hiatus between the ranges of *heermanni* and *mailliardi*. For, as our San Joaquin work has demonstrated, it is a grave mistake to assume that song sparrows range uniformly all over the bed of the Valley and up into the foothills. Rather are there only narrow belts of occupied ground, coinciding with sections of riparian strips. Vast areas of dry prairie intervene, unsuited to this bird. However, a circumstance accompanying human invasion will tend to obliterate these original conditions: Song sparrows were seen in the Fresno district along irrigation canals. These canals thus serve to divert a stream of riparian plants and animals, including the song sparrow, out over the plains between the rivers, by which process the fauna of the originally arid levels becomes metamorphosed. The ranges of the song sparrows of interior California may thus be expected to shift to a considerable extent from what they were or even are at the present stage of events.

An incident of interest though not of definite significance was that at the Earlimart reservoir referred to above there were two females, each with a nest, but only one male, at least at the time of my arrival, April 30. One of the females, shot together with the male on that date, contained very large ova (one egg would have been laid probably the next day), and her nest was apparently completed. The other female was taken on May 2 together with her nest and four fresh, or infertile, eggs. This bird was incubating, as the subdermal layer in the abdominal region was glandular to an extreme degree. This state of affairs (one male, and two females with nests) might be accounted for by any one of three explanations: (1) that there *was* another male at the reservoir, but destroyed by some means before my arrival; (2) that an excess female without a mate had gone ahead and built a nest and produced infertile eggs; or (3) that where there were more females than males, polygamy had occurred and the male had mated with two

females. It should be emphasized that these three song sparrows were the only ones found in the Earlimart neighborhood, and that the reservoir referred to (on the Moore ranch) was the only bit of favorable environment within a radius of at least three miles.

Forbush Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni striata*). Four specimens quite typical of this form were shot at a marshy place in the San Joaquin river bottom near Lane Bridge, Fresno County, April 9 and 10. Tyler (CONDOR XIII, March 1911, p. 76) has already recorded this sparrow from the Fresno district, but as found in December.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo erythrogastra*). A pair seen by both Mr. Tyler and myself on a telephone wire over a bridge near Fresno March 15. Doubtless the same pair was seen in the same place April 6. The former date appears to be the earliest on record for the arrival of this swallow within the State. Mr. Tyler tells me that very many Barn Swallows nest in Fresno County; and I found a pair nesting near Tipton, Tulare County, April 24.

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*). On March 11 I saw a male of this species among some valley oaks five miles northeast of Tracy, San Joaquin County. The bird was staying around clumps of mistletoe, which plant infested many of the oaks at this point. I also heard notes of Phainopeplas in the distance, though only the one individual was located; so it is not improbable that the occurrence was more than casual at this time and place. I saw a male of this species in the foothills at Raymond, Madera County, April 16.

California Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus gambeli*). A nest of this species was observed near Pixley, Tulare County, April 29, containing seven well-incubated eggs. The notable feature of this nest was the site selected. The region is well-nigh tree-less, hence those birds under natural conditions selecting trees for nesting places and at the same time determined to remain in the region are compelled to resort to unusual sites for their nests. All through the valley, beginning April 20, the Western Kingbirds were building nests on telegraph poles and fence posts. The pair of shrikes in question had constructed their nest on top of one of the posts of a fence paralleling the county road where autos and other vehicles were constantly passing. The nest was sheltered by two boards converging overhead and nailed to the fence post vertically for the support of a telephone wire. The nest was typically constructed, the outer portion of an interlaced mass of stiff twigs flaring out broadly on the two unsheltered sides. To express it otherwise the nest was so firmly wedged between the two boards that it could not have been removed except by tearing it to pieces or removing the boards. In spite of its conspicuous position the venture gave promise of success.

California Least Vireo (*Vireo belli pusillus*). At Lane Bridge, ten miles north of Fresno, this bird had already arrived April 7. Several were heard or seen in the willow association along the Fresno County side of the San Joaquin River. Mr. Tyler says the species nests in the Fresno district.

Dotted Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus*). There being no canyons or even steep-sided ravines, at Raymond, Madera County, the presence of the Canyon Wren was rather unexpected there. However the otherwise smoothe and rounded foothills were marred by many low projecting ledges and bowlder-piles. These evidently formed congenial and productive forage ground, though the two pairs of wrens discovered had each established headquarters in places of human construction—one in an abandoned cabin, the other in a granite quarry.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). Abundant on the newly sprouted grain fields around Tracy, San Joaquin County, the second week in March. This species was reported from several quarters as much more numerous than usual the past winter on the floor of the valley.—J. GRINNELL.

An Albino.—I have noticed two albino English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) lately. One specimen was a dirty gray, and the other, which I have seen several times, is pinkish cinnamon, with snow white tail and primaries.—W. E. UNGLISH.

The Bohemian Waxwing in Sacramento County, California.—That there has been a general visitation by this species to this state the past season is further indicated by the following record: Mr. W. H. Noble, of Galt, Sacramento County, California, sent to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology a specimen (now no. 17210) of *Bombycilla garrula* taken at that place March 14, 1911.—J. GRINNELL.